

that people will think, “Oh well, this economy has been so good, so long, nobody can mess it up”—[*laughter*]—or that everybody seems so nice, nobody can do anything too bad. There is a difference. These people should be in the majority in the House. We should hold the White House. We should win the Senate.

And you can go and tell people, “Look, it’s not as if they’re taking a big chance. You’ve got evidence now. We were divided all the way along on economic policy, on crime policy, on welfare policy, on education policy, on environmental policy. And the evidence is in. And the ideas are out there. The best days of this country are still ahead. The best days for Hispanic America are still ahead. But we have got to make the right choices.”

You made a good investment coming here tonight, and I want you now to make your investment good by taking every opportunity, every day, between now and November, to make the same arguments, in your own way, I made to you tonight.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 7:50 p.m. in the Chinese Room at the Mayflower Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Representative Lucille Roybal-Allard.

Remarks at a Reception for Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton

June 13, 2000

Thank you. Well, if I had any sense, I wouldn’t say a word. [*Laughter*] Thank you.

Let me say, first of all, I want to thank Vernon and Ann for once again proving one of their most endearing and enduring virtues: They stick with their friends. And Eleanor is their friend. We have all been friends a long time, and Hillary and I have known Vernon for a long time. When I was a 32-year-old Governor, I went to Vernon Jordan’s Urban League banquet speech in Little Rock, stayed up half the night talking to him. Hillary had already known him for years. In fact, she never lets me forget. [*Laughter*]

And I would be less charitable, however, than Eleanor was. I think Ann actually saved Vernon’s life. [*Laughter*] I was delighted

when they got married because I needed him around for the rest of my life. [*Laughter*] And they have been so wonderful to all of us who are their friends, and I thank them for doing this.

Mr. Mayor, I’m glad to see you. And Councilwoman, I’m glad to see you. And Secretary Herman, I’m glad to see you. Secretary Herman and Eleanor and I, we sort of, in our different ways, tried to help the administration of Jimmy Carter. So we go back a long, long time.

I just want to say a few words tonight about Washington. First of all, I’m very proud of our Mayor, who was, in his previous life, a member of my administration. I have always loved Washington. You know, I’ve had a lot of homes in my life. I grew up in Arkansas, and I went to law school in Connecticut. Everybody knows now I’ve got a home in New York, which I’m very proud of. It’s getting better every day. [*Laughter*] Fixing a 111-year-old farmhouse is almost as challenging as winning a Senate seat. [*Laughter*] But I hope and pray we’ll be successful at both.

But when I was a young man, I went to college in Washington. And I worked on the Hill every day. I lived in the District all 4 years I was in college. I love this city. I saw it burn after Dr. King was killed. I used to drive up and down those avenues, and I saw those empty storefronts. You know, I didn’t know then, obviously, I would ever be President. Eleanor says she knew a long time ago. I really think when I announced for President my mother was the only person who thought I could win. [*Laughter*]

But I always promised myself, if I could ever do anything for this city I would, because it was plainly, in some ways, the most beautiful capital in the entire world. It was full of people from all over the world. It had a rich and textured history that deserved to be nourished, a lot of things people don’t even know about. You know, we have a national historic site here in Anacostia that is Frederick Douglass’ home, that he lived in from after the Civil War until he died, that I urge all of you to go see, if you haven’t. I’ll flak for the National Park Service a little.

So when I became President, before I was inaugurated, I took a walk down Georgia Avenue. And I talked to the merchants there,

and I talked to the people on the street. I was always looking for things I could do. Eleanor and I were joking today—she went jogging in a campaign event for me in 1992. In the pouring rain, we were running up Pennsylvania Avenue together. I never will forget that. And because she's been where she's been, it's been possible for me, I think, to be a pretty good friend and a pretty good citizen of Washington, DC. But if she hadn't been there, if she didn't have the enormous credibility she has in the Congress, among both Republicans and Democrats, and if she didn't have an idea a minute—[*laughter*—then all these things that I have been able to do, I could not have done. Someone could write a whole chapter on my service as President to Washington, DC, in two words: Yes, Eleanor. [*Laughter*] And if it were to be four words, it would have to be: Yes, Eleanor; yes, Eleanor. [*Laughter*]

We had a great time together, and it's been a joy. Now we've got this great Mayor who is inspiring so much confidence and broadening the base of support for the city, and there's so much more to be done. But I would hope that every American would want the United States Congress and the private sector and everybody else to do whatever we can for Washington. It ought to be the greatest city in America. It ought to be the greatest capital in the world. It's full of wonderful people and wonderful neighborhoods and wonderful possibilities, and we have really just begun to do what we ought to do.

I hope someday that she'll actually have a real vote in the Congress, too. And that we'll have representation in the other House of the Congress. I hope that will happen.

But I just want all of you to know that I'm grateful to you for helping her, but I know, I think I know that your presence here means you're also committed to helping make DC an even greater city, an even better place to live, an even more admirable National Capital. And believe me, for those of you who were here, like me, in the early and mid-sixties, it's stunning, the difference. But if you know the city, if you know all its neighborhoods, if you know all its schools, if you know every little nook and cranny of it, you know we've only scratched the surface of

what we can do to make this the city it ought to be.

I keep telling the American people, as I travel around the country now, that in so many ways the election of 2000 is as important as the elections of '92 and '96, and in some ways, a sterner test of our judgment and character. Because when I got elected, the country was against a wall, and it didn't take too much for them to take a chance on me. You remember me; President Bush referred to me as the Governor of a small southern State. [*Laughter*] And I was so dumb, I thought it was a compliment. [*Laughter*] And I still do. [*Laughter*]

But anyway, we knew we had to do some things that were different. We knew we had to take a chance. We knew we had to kind of break out of the mold of the way business was conducted in the city. But now the test is, what is it that we propose as a nation to do with this prosperity of ours? Anybody that's over 30 years old has got sense enough to know that nothing goes on forever. And anybody over 30 years old can remember at least one time in your life when you made a mistake, not because things were so bad but because things were so good you thought there were no consequences to the failure to concentrate.

So I hope one of the things that we will think about—those of us in this room, at least—in this election season, is how important it is to use this moment to finish the job for Washington, DC, and to make it the greatest city of any national capital in the world. We can do this. We have the local leadership now. We have the idea machine—[*laughter*]—beloved of all Members of Congress. If as many Republicans liked me as liked her, they'd repeal the 22d amendment. [*Laughter*]

We can do this. But remember, you don't want to be sitting around in somebody's living room 10 years from now and thinking, "Gosh, I wish I had done this, that, or the other thing for Washington." So let's make sure we truly honor Eleanor by having no regrets about how we use this magic moment.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:40 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to reception hosts Vernon and Ann Jordan; Mayor Anthony A. Williams of Washington, DC; and Linda W. Cropp, chair, Council of the District of Columbia.

Remarks on Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage and an Exchange With Reporters

June 14, 2000

The President. Good afternoon. Senator Daschle, Representative Gephardt, Secretary Shalala, and I have just met with these leaders of organizations representing America's seniors, people with disabilities, and community pharmacists. We spoke about the great need for Congress to give all Medicare beneficiaries an affordable prescription drug option. We spoke about the merits and the shortfalls of new legislative proposals on prescription drugs now emerging in the House.

Funding for Enforcement of Gun Laws

Before I go into the details of the discussions this morning, I want to briefly touch on another pressing priority before the House, funding for enforcement of our gun laws.

For years, the Republican leadership has emphasized the importance of enforcing our gun laws as a reason for opposing other commonsense gun safety measures. Yet they have failed so far to put their money where their words are. Today a House appropriations committee appears to be on the verge of approving a bill that absolutely guts our administration's proposal for the largest gun enforcement initiative in history.

Incomprehensible though it may be, their bill fails to provide any funding at all to hire 1,000 new State and local gun prosecutors to help take gun criminals out of our communities and put them behind bars. It undermines our efforts to replicate the success of Richmond's Project Exile, another key initiative the Republicans have always said they support. And it fails to provide funding to expand research and development of smart gun technology.

I ask the Republican leadership to reverse the current course, to live up to the rhetoric,

to fully fund the national gun enforcement initiative.

Of course, no society can prevent every tragedy or outrage, but we can save lives with a combination of new commonsense gun laws and enhanced enforcement of the laws already on the books. We're going to have to do this in a bipartisan manner, if it's going to get done, and to recognize the American people want both strong enforcement and strong prevention.

Medicare Prescription Drug Coverage

Now, back to prescription drugs. The American people here have also made their intentions clear. Our seniors want affordable, dependable coverage for the prescription medications that lengthen their lives and improve its quality. That's the message we heard yesterday from Ruth Westfall, a retired teacher from rural Idaho, the message I heard from leaders I met with a few moments ago. That's certainly what Senator Daschle and Republican Gephardt are hearing from their constituents and what they're fighting hard for up on the Hill.

All the leaders here today recognize that adding a voluntary prescription drug benefit is not just the right thing to do; medically speaking, it's the smart thing to do. No one creating the Medicare program today would think of doing so without prescription drug coverage. Prescription drugs now can accomplish what once could be done only with surgery.

That's why we have proposed the comprehensive plan to provide a prescription drug benefit that is optional and accessible to all our seniors; a plan that ensures that all older Americans, no matter where they live or how sick they are, will pay the same affordable premiums; a plan that uses price competition, not price controls, to guarantee that seniors will get the best prices; a plan that would cover catastrophic drug costs, as well as regular drug bills; a plan that is part of an overall effort to strengthen and modernize Medicare, so we won't have to ask our children to shoulder the burden when the baby boomers retire.

There is growing bipartisan support for prescription drug action this year, and that's good. But the leaders and advocates here